

Continued

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

Ready

From 1 "At the beginning of the week, when there was not a favorable forecast for our area coupled with our history of flooding, we removed all of the furniture from the building," said Southern Bank Vice President and City Executive Crystal Godwin. "We were able to move our computer and files to our upstairs storage space so we could continue to operate."

Godwin said Southern Bank and other businesses were more prepared for the possibilities associated with a hurricane.

"We are most definitely more prepared," she said. "Unfortunately, we have been flooded several times, and we have been able to learn from those times and we get better and more prepared each time."

Bertie County Economic Development Director Steve Biggs and Windsor/Bertie County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Lewis Hoggard each commended the business community for their preparation efforts.

"I am impressed by the work all the businesses did

to prepare for the worst," Hoggard said. "I think we were definitely more prepared. I think at this point we all know the question is not if we flood again, but when."

Biggs added, "Our businesses and industries are the most reliable people I have ever met. They know what to do before and after a storm."

"In this case, they were as ready as they conceivably could be," he added. "All measures were taken - everything that could be stacked high or moved off premises was done in sufficient time."

Windsor Mayor Jimmy Hoggard said the town was prepared, and worked well with county leaders.

"Our emergency team met with the county folks a number of times," he said. "In addition to that, we met as a group to make sure everyone was ready and nothing had been overlooked. We've done it enough times now we mostly know what to do."

The change of path further south for Hurricane Florence left Bertie County spared the brunt of the storm, something everyone in the county

was thankful to see.

"We are still working to support the families and individuals impacted by Tropical Storm Julia and Hurricane Matthew, and the processes are under way to hopefully proceed with the buyout and elevation of homes beginning in early 2019," Bertie County Manager Scott Sauer said. "Another storm and a direct impact from Hurricane Florence would have been devastating for our citizens. Prayer works, and our community was spared - this time."

Sauer praised the Bertie County Commissioners, town of Windsor leaders and Vidant Bertie Hospital as being true partners during preparations.

While the storm mostly spared Bertie County, it caused major devastation in the southern portions of North Carolina.

"We've been there, so our hearts go out to them," Mayor Hoggard said. "Especially places like Wilmington where there is water standing and no one - not even fire, police or rescue - can get to them. We very much sympathize with them."

Godwin agreed.

"I was extremely relieved and felt we were very blessed with the outcome here," she said. "I hate it for the people of southern North Carolina and parts of South Carolina. They are in our thoughts and prayers."

Bertie County has also sent help to the southern areas of North Carolina. Cooper is currently working in Sampson County, leading a team of ambulance crews from northeastern counties there to assist flooded areas.

In addition, firemen from both Windsor and Merry Hill have gone to provide assistance.

The county leaders also said it was important not to take the outcome of this storm for granted.

"We should never let our guard down given the increasing frequency and severity of these storms," Sauer said. "Bertie County is a very resilient and caring community, and I cannot think of a place I would rather serve."

Lewis Hoggard agreed.

"Unfortunately, the preparation we did this time is the new normal," he said. "We

must expect the worst and hope for the best."

Cooper said as well as the community prepared, there is still more to do. He said he would present a report to Bertie Commissioners about how to prepare even better next time.

"Failing to prepare is preparing to fail," Cooper said. "It's a motto I've come to keep close to my heart. We have to always remember it."

Castelloe said people did well to prepare, and should anytime a storm threatens.

"I believe all the preparation was appropriate," he said. "Had the rainfall associated with the storm been just 30-50 miles further north, we would have a very different situation in our town today. I hope given the same forecast and facts, our collective town will react in the same way next time."

Biggs said people have an easy example.

"We all need to live by the Boys Scout motto, 'Be prepared'."

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Florence

From 1 signed a State of Emergency into effect at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 11.

Bertie County Manager Scott Sauer and Windsor Mayor Jimmy Hoggard held a press conference last Tuesday and warned the public of the potential dangers of the storm.

Bertie County initially scheduled a curfew to begin at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 12 until 5:30 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 13 and run each night until it was lifted.

Bertie County officials decided to lift the curfew for Wednesday night to allow citizens more time to prepare for the storm.

Several business owners cleared merchandise from their buildings prior to the storm as a precaution from possible flooding.

According to Bertie County Emergency Management Director Mitch Cooper, the county was spared during Hurricane Florence.

Bertie County only received three-to-four inches of rain throughout the event.

The Cashie River did not reach flood levels, and as of 10:15 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 18, the Cashie River was only at 4.66 feet.

The action flood stage for the Cashie River is six feet, and major flood stage is 13 feet.

Two tornado warnings were issued across the county on Friday, with one tornado being confirmed.

According to Cooper, Merry Hill Fire Chief Jodey Sary witnessed the tornado near Bachelor Bay Road, and heading toward Cooper Hill Road.

"There were several downed trees and broken tree tops from the tornado, but no significant damage," Cooper added.

Overall, Bertie County only had several downed trees due to the impacts from Hurricane Florence.

"We had several lose power, but we were very fortunate compared to some of the coun-

ties south of us," said Cooper.

Bertie County opened three shelters ahead of the storm: at Bertie High School, Colerain Elementary School and West Bertie Elementary School.

According to Cooper, around 180 people took shelter at the facilities Thursday night, and with the diminished threat of the storm the shelters closed at 5 p.m. Friday (Sept. 14).

Bertie County evacuated 28 patients from Windsor House to a facility in Scotland Neck as a precaution before the storm.

"We closed the shelters and released our assets to our neighboring counties that have been devastated. We were very fortunate, but the counties affected need our prayers and services," said Cooper.

Cooper is currently in Sampson County and says the devastation is unreal.

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RUSS RUSSELL / Bertie Ledger-Advance

A radar-doppler tornado was indicated as the outer bands of wind and rain from Hurricane Florence crossed portions of Bertie County. Entering from Washington County, this rain-wrapped tornado twisted upper portions of trees showing little signs of landing near Merry Hill toward Todd's Cross before heading to northern Windsor and on to western Bertie County. This large tree was twisted off near the top.

Support the Falcons and Warriors!

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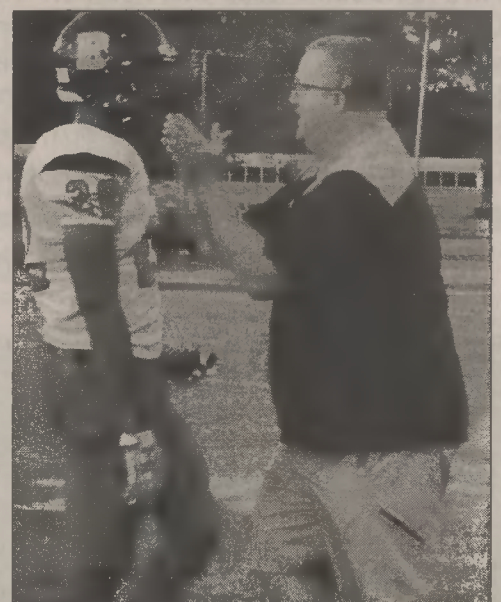
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7 p.m.
Lasker



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